The Middlebury Campus

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FACULTY VOTE TO REDUCE CREDITS NEEDED TO GRADUATE, WILL DEBATE RESTRICTING LATIN HONORS

By RYAN McELROY & MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Editor in Chief & Managing Editor

During a three-hour faculty meeting on Friday, Nov. 8, Middlebury professors voted in favor of the Faculty Council's proposal to reduce the credits needed for graduation from 36 to 34. The decision will take effect on July 1, 2025, meaning that students enrolled in the fall 2025 semester will now need to take only 34 credits to graduate, but AP or IB credits will not count towards that total.

The recent assembly also debated restricting the college's Latin honors system, which currently grants the vast majority of students qualify for cum laude honors or higher. In December, the faculty will vote on whether to grant honors at graduation on a much more limited basis.

The approved credit reduction was first passed unanimously by last year's Student Government Association (SGA) last spring. The motion passed last Friday with 75% support — 82 professors voted in favor, 26 voted against and one abstained.

Previously, approximately two-thirds of the student body arrived at Middlebury with usable credits from high school courses, but only about half of them applied these credits to graduation, and half of them exceeded the minimum credit requirement, according to data collected by Registrar Jen Thompson.

Under the new changes, students with AP and IB credits on their transcript next fall can no longer count those towards graduation, but because they only need 34 credits to graduate, it will not affect their graduation timeline, according to Faculty Council Chair Jason Mittell. Departments may still use pre-collegiate scores for course placement or to waive requirements for a minor or major.

The current SGA administration announced the decision to students in an email on Friday afternoon, which clarified the eligibility and celebrated the decision.

Credit Reduction

At the meeting, Mittell and council member Bert Johnson outlined the proposal and its rationale. They view the reduction in requirements as a follow-through to the change passed in 2004 that reduced

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College donates section of Snow Bowl Long Trail, preserving public access

MAGGIE BRYAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Long Trail, which stretches across the top of the Snow Bowl, is a popular hiking spot for students.

By SOPHIA GALUPPO
Contributing Writer

Middlebury is now the latest contributor to Green Mountain Club's (GMC) efforts to protect the Long Trail. Last month, the college donated a 1.5-mile segment of land — stretching from the summit of Worth Mountain to Vermont Route 125 — to GMC, leaving just two percent of the land on the Long Trail unprotected.

For over 100 years, GMC has been managing trails across the state, which collectively span a network of 500 miles. The Long Trail is the organization's flagship conservation effort: to protect a 272-mile-long stretch that follows the ridge of the Green Mountains from Massachusetts to the Canadian border. With Middlebury's donation, the club now manages over 200 miles of the trail, and 98% of the trail is legally protected.

The land given by the college is considered a right-of-way path, meaning from now on, the land will not be able to be developed for any

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MIDDLEBURY REACTS TO TRUMP'S VICTORY

By MAGGIE BRYAN & DECLAN RICHARDS
Senior News Editor & Contributing Writer

In the early hours of Wednesday, Nov. 6, national news outlets called the 2024 presidential election for former President Donald Trump. As the election finally came to a close last week, Middlebury community members' responses ranged from disappointed and anxious to celebratory.

On election night, many students gathered in The Grille, where MiddVotes hosted a watch party with commentary from Professor of Political Science Bert Johnson. As the night progressed, tensions rose as the fate of the race became clear.

Laura McDow '26, who volunteered for the Harris campaign and serves as communications director for MiddVotes, described her difficult experience with election night.

"I started out in The Grille just to be there... That was great, it was really fun. It was fun to be there as Vermont was called for Harris and all of those elections. As someone who is from North Carolina, I was ready to be there if things were going to go great," she said. "As things started to not seem great, I was like: I need to leave."

The morning after, the dismay among many students was palpable on campus, according to Noah Plummer '28.

"You could definitely tell that something was off on campus, no one really returned my waves, and it seemed like pretty much everyone was in shock," he said.

Norah Khan '27, co-president of Middlebury College Democrats, articulated the sadness she felt that day, saying it felt like she had a pit in her stomach.

"When I saw that [the results], it felt surreal because I didn't want to accept it. I didn't want to think about what that was going to mean for our country, for me, for the people in the communities I'm part of," Khan said.

Not everyone was upset about the results. Joseph Jacobsen '27, president of Middlebury College Republicans, which had campaigned for Trump in the months leading up to the election, told The Campus that most of the club was excited about the results on a national and local level.

"It's amazing, I think it really shows that Vermonters wanted a change," he said, referring to Republican candidates' wins across Vermont. "We're excited to see what Trump can do to help fix some of the issues in the country."

On Wednesday, several classes paused to process the intense emotions felt by the student body. School-sponsored, supportive programming began in the lead-up to the election and continued on election night and in the days that followed, emphasizing positive habits for mental health.

To many, the election results were surprising; however, for Professor of Political Science Matthew Dickinson, the Electoral College result — Trump's 312 votes to Harris's 226 — made sense given the political models he had been

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COURTESY PHOTO / LAURA MCDOW

Professor of Political Science Bert Johnson moderated the MiddVotes election night coverage last week.

MULTIMEDIA

GOING ON SITE: A TOUR OF THE NEW FIRST YEAR DORM

By RYAN McELROY, MADELEINE KAPTEIN & COLE CHAUDHARI
Editor in Chief & Managing Editors

Exterior furnishing and interior development remain well underway on the new first year dorm located between Coffrin Hall and BiHall, situated on the northern end of Battell Beach. The new dorm is set to replace Battell Hall, which will be torn down and replaced by an

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COLE CHAUDHARI / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Construction in action on the side of the new first year dorm.

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Board of Trustees discusses finances, names Patton President Emerita

By ROSELLA GRAHAM
News Editor

On Tuesday, Nov. 5, the Board of Trustees met on campus from Oct. 24–26 to discuss a variety of issues affecting the college and to name Laurie Patton President Emerita prior to her departure in January. The trustees also reviewed new fundraising by the "For Every Future" campaign, learned about the college's finances and projected budget deficit for the 2025 fiscal year, and heard student presentations, according to a press release from the college.

Board members met with Patton and Sarah Stroup, professor of Political Science and director of the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation, to review the $25 million initiative and its implementation on campus so far.

"The board participated in a "Conflict Styles Self-Assessment," Stroup wrote in an email to The Campus. "The point of the exercise is not to suggest that there is a 'best' conflict style, but to enable reflection on what each person tends to do in conflict situations and then think about whether that approach is best suited for achieving their goals."

Stroup and Brian Lind, associate dean for Community Standards, announced the creation of the Laurie Patton Leadership in Conflict Transformation Award. The award will be given annually to recognize an undergraduate student who has made "significant contributions to the campus through community building efforts and a dedication to peacebuilding and understanding," according to the announcement.

"Our goal with this award is to spotlight a student who has truly embodied the work of Conflict Transformation," Lind wrote in an email to The Campus. "President Patton's leadership in this area is an important part of her legacy as president and this felt like an appropriate way to both honor her work and elevate the work of students in an ongoing way."

Much of the board's meetings three weeks ago focused on the college's financial highlights with the endowment growth and new offerings at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS).

In the 2024 fiscal year, Middlebury's finances experienced an overall growth of 9.2% compared to the prior fiscal year with a 6.7% increase in expenses attributable to inflation in health care and wages. The college will face a projected budget deficit of $8.9 million for the current fiscal year, which it intends to address through a four-year plan that includes the business plan for MIIS the trustees approved last spring.

Starting in fall of 2025, MIIS will offer two shorter master's programs with new online degree programs in cybersecurity, organizational leadership and analytics. The college's press release stated the trustees hope these changes will increase enrollment at Monterey for students interested in pursuing careers in what are seen as timely and high-demand fields. These adjustments come at a price, with trustees also voting to increase tuition and fees at MIIS by 3.5% from $23,278 to $24,935 per semester for in-person, full-time students.

In Vermont, the construction of the 200-unit mixed-income housing project, Stonecrop Meadows, is set to begin in the coming months, and the trustees last month approved a $2.5 million investment in Summit Properties to cover infrastructure costs.

The board also designated one million dollars in additional funding over the span of a 20-year period to support the renovation of the Ilsley Library, which has plans for a two-story addition.

In addition to funding from the college to the town of Middlebury, Dan Courcey, vice president for Advancement, updated board members on the "For Every Future: The Campaign for Middlebury" which has raised over $485 million. This milestone brings the college closer to its $600 million goal it announced when the campaign entered its public phase in 2023.

On Oct. 23, four student divestment representatives from Middlebury Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) met with the College Board of Advisors, the Resource Committee of the Board of Trustees and administrators to discuss their ongoing campaign for divesting the endowment from war profiteering. This meeting was a follow-up from an earlier conversation between SJP and administration members in May of this year.

"Initially, we presented the College with a list of 45 companies curated from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and as a sign of good faith, committed to a shorter list of twenty-five companies... Their refusal to take action and begin the divestment process has led us to re-commit to the list of 45 companies," wrote one member of SJP in an email to The Campus.

On Wednesday, Nov. 20, SJP student representatives plan on giving a presentation parallel to the one they gave to the Board of Trustees in hopes of allowing students to learn more about their divestment campaign.

"We will continue to meet with the Board of Trustees through administrative networks for as long as necessary," wrote another member of the SJP. "However, our efforts must be reciprocated with intentional actions by the Board of Trustees."

The Board of Trustees will meet again remotely on Feb. 6–8, 2025, and for the final time this academic year on May 8–10.

COURTESY PHOTO / MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Laurie Patton was named President Emerita at the Board of Trustees meeting on Friday.

MIDDLEBURY REACTS TO TRUMP'S VICTORY

COURTESY PHOTO/LAURA MCDOW

Middlebury students gathered in The Grille on election night as results filtered in.

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watching closely.

"We knew going into the night that it was very close, both nationally in the popular vote, and in those seven key swing states," Dickinson said in an interview with The Campus.

Dickinson added that, while the Harris campaign's closing argument revolved around defending democracy, he is not personally concerned about President-elect Trump's threat to democracy.

"The Framers set up a system that made it hard to get things done without an overwhelming consensus, otherwise incremental change is about the best we can get," Dickinson said. "It is very hard for an individual, even one with authoritarian tendencies, to suspend civil liberties, so I do not worry at all for democracy or the suspension of civil liberties."

Yet for many students, worries about Trump's victory go far beyond the state of democracy. Students expressed their concerns about climate change, racial equity, healthcare access, safety for undocumented workers and support for LGBTQ+ communities.

Khan told The Campus she worries that with control over all three branches of government, the Trump administration will be able to execute many of the anti-immigrant policies it advocated for during its campaign.

"A lot of the measures that his [Trump's] administration is going to take, either mass deportations or some form of restrictions for these people in our country, that's going to have a terrible impact on pretty much every aspect of every industry," she said.

Elio Farley '24.5 is a community organizer whose work spans several causes, including coordinating MiddPride, a youth-centered rural pride celebration in Middlebury last month. For Farley, the results of the election reflected the fear and hopelessness that many live with daily.

"The day after the election I taught a trans kid how I cut my hair. I helped him give himself a haircut. He actually felt good with this hair. I am trying to teach the queer kids in my life to not make themselves small. People are really scared right now. I honor that. I feel that. I have been scared my whole life," Farley wrote in an email to The Campus.

Oakley Martin '25 is a volunteer with the Trevor Project's crisis line, which offers around-the-clock support to LGBTQ+ youth. The night after the election, she worked a volunteer shift, during which the hotline experienced a 700% increase in contacts; the majority of people who contacted the organization attributed their concerns to the election. As an activist, Martin said that the election did raise the urgency of her work, but she also spoke to the importance of endurance — recognizing that the issues of this election span further than one presidential administration.

"I want it [my work] to be sustainable and not a one to two-month sprint right in the aftermath of the election. I want to be able to continue that across the many, many years, because even as national administrations come and go, a lot of these issues are still really present at really small levels, within families and in state politics," Martin said.

For organizers and activists like Farley and Martin, the work of supporting communities most impacted by this election did not start on Nov. 6, and will not end no matter who the president is.

"We have the skills to keep each other safe, albeit imperfectly. We have been preparing for an acceleration of violence, especially because north of White River Junction is ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] special privilege territory," Farley wrote, referring to ICE's broad authority within much of the state of Vermont.

Despite resounding disappointment and demoralization, many students view the results of the election as clarifying their values and motivating their goals. For McDow, the election's results have affirmed her career goals.

"My major is in migration, and I want to go into migration law. This is a huge impact on that field of work, it seems more necessary now than ever," she explained.

Farley expressed how the election has invigorated him to continue being creative in his organizing efforts as a means of resistance.

"My brain has been in strategy mode: How do we get people to know their own power when they feel overwhelming fear? How do we onboard and plug folks in to the work that is already being done?" he wrote.

Middlebury President Laurie Patton addressed the election results at the faculty meeting on Friday, Nov. 8, where she echoed the importance of targeted support for the most impacted communities.

"Some of those that we need to support at a time of vulnerability: Our faculty, staff and students who are underrepresented, those who are employees of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, students who are LGBTQIA, DACA, those on an international visa. Each of those student populations — and many others, I'm just talking about the most vulnerable right now — given the agenda, we'll need it to be thought about and addressed in very specific ways. There's no one-size-fits-all here," Patton said.

Across the spectrum of political beliefs and election reactions, students and community members spoke to a need for unity and visibility, in terms of diverse identities and political beliefs.

Helena Gu '25 and Audrey Park '25 emphasized the increasing importance of escaping Internet and social echo chambers to find common political understanding in the wake of the election results.

"Over the past two or three months, my social media, my TikTok, has given me all these happy videos that support Kamala... that make you feel so confident about them winning," Gu said. "And then the election comes, and it's like somebody blew a bubble this big for you and then popped it right on election night."

Park said she hopes that the Democratic Party will learn from their country-wide losses and change their messaging to be more inclusive rather than angry towards Trump voters.

"I believe that this is a time where we need to actively find ways to relate to one another in order to cut out this polarization," she said.

From a political science perspective, Dickinson said he believes the election may make Americans perceive more division than actually exists.

"The election results make us look more divided than we really are. Our choices may be divided, but our politics really aren't. Trump supporters also have a lot more in common with Harris supporters than they might realize," Dickinson said.

Aside from political divisions, the election will also likely impact institutions of higher education. Jacobsen, the president of Middlebury Republicans, praised Trump's policies on cultural issues and especially the president-elect's approach in the liberal arts.

"One part of Trump's platform is to restore classical liberal arts education and to combat some of what the right typically perceives as wokeism or elitism in the liberal arts that is denigrating what the liberal arts should really be about," Jacobsen said, continuing that he hopes Trump will take steps to promote free speech in liberal arts environments.

During the election, Trump outlined plans to restrict classroom discussion; under his previous administration, he proposed several billion-dollar cuts to the Department of Education.

In her address to faculty, Patton highlighted the undeniable threat that institutions like Middlebury now face in the wake of the 2024 election.

"Staying grounded in those local communities will help us humanize those with different political views at the same time, even if we disagree on issues. We have to fight like hell right now for higher education and our students," Patton said. "There is no other option."

Editor's Note: Norah Khan is an Arts and Culture Editor for The Campus. Editor in Chief Ryan McElroy '25, Managing Editor Madeleine Kaptein '25.5 and News Editor Evan Weiss '25 contributed reporting.

MIDDLEBURY CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WEEK

By CAROLINE JIAO
News Editor

For international students at Middlebury, making sense of the turbulence in today's world — from ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East to the U.S. presidential election — can be particularly challenging in rural Vermont. Amidst the weight of global challenges, Middlebury's International Student Organization (ISO) organized International Week, which student organizers hoped would create an atmosphere of celebration, recognition and resilience on campus.

What used to be ISO weekend has evolved into a full week of programming. Co-president of ISO Changchang Ma '26, who has been part of the organization for more than two years, has witnessed the board condense into an 11-person group, allowing more efficiency and direct communication. She recognized the inherent complexity of approaching a week meant for joy in an increasingly complicated world.

"In a world that's not perfect by any means, I think complexity is something that we really try to portray, be it through events that are more political or events that touch conflict," she told The Campus.

The ISO show on Saturday, the week's capstone event, embodied that complexity by showcasing performances with cultural and political significance.

Sofiia Tretiak '27 from Lviv, Ukraine, who has 12 years of dance experience and performed in the two Ukrainian dances for the show, told The Campus why she believes using performance as a cultural and political message is valuable.

"Students here trying to do what we can to keep reminding the Middlebury community about the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war and the continued attempts of Russia to erase not only our homes, our cities, but also our culture, our identity, our language and everything that is so dear to us," she said.

Tretiak also called for students to start learning about Ukraine beyond the framework of war and to acknowledge that the country has long-lasting traditions and history.

"It is my desire to share the richness and beauty of Ukrainian culture, and in particular our unique and very diverse folk dances that can be both melancholic, graceful and flowing," she said. "I feel it's important to showcase these energies, and that we're proud of who we are and we're not defined by just the war."

While performances like this are planned carefully, Co-president of ISO Shloka Raghavan '27 said one challenge was coordinating across a wide number of students representing different groups.

While it is never an easy task to bring forth deeper conversations about cultural identities and diversity through completely student-run stage shows, the capacity of which is often limited by assistance and time, Ma hopes having the production process as a collaborative experience can serve to strengthen the community.

"International students come together from so many different backgrounds around the world, and to put an effort to produce something together, we meet people, connect with people, get to know another person in a deeper sense, beyond, you know, taking the same classes," she said.

The ISO is also looking to enhance its internal diversity by developing a new liaison program, which was first proposed during an open house feedback session in September. It would allow ISO to partner with other student organizations on campus to highlight specific regions.

"We want more regional diversity in our events. Since most of our board members are from a certain demographic, that tends to be more of the events we do because that's what we know better, but we're trying to get regional liaisons to make sure we do have more variety of events," Raghavan said.

Ma explained that it is still in the initial stages of planning as ISO consults faculty and students for more input.

"As we talked to many students and some staff members about it, the first question is, how do we divide up the world? The world's division is already a very Western concept," she said. "Other questions include, does representation in this way necessarily mean that this will be more inclusive?" Ma said.

The week's pilot liaison event is a Caribbean dinner partnered with the Caribbean Student Association, a new club on campus, in collaboration with The House, a local non-profit. ISO provided the funding for the dinner and liaison Kiara Dookie '26 cooked for the event.

Annette Franklin, founder of The House, was delighted to make new connections and to offer up the space.

"It was really great and so many new students showed up. There were 25 here, and 20 of them were students I hadn't met before," she said.

Franklin has been deeply engaged with the international student community on campus since 2011. Given the daily difficulties of living in today's world, Franklin said she believes that having consistent spaces for people to spend time together becomes in itself an effort in solidarity.

"It's really life-giving for me. Sometimes it can be emotionally challenging hearing students who are walking through difficult life things, and I'd like to be there for them. I enjoy talking to students, finding out their stories, and just taking the time to sit and listen to them, which can be challenging in big groups, but to try to talk to each person," she said.

While the global political climate may be uncertain, the ISO's week of events served as a reminder that international students can carve out moments of joy and mutual understanding and that it takes small actions to build meaningful connections. For many of the students involved, this week was not just about cultural celebration, but also about affirming the importance of community in a world that feels increasingly fractured.

"We're not only bodies of culture, but we have different lived experiences that reflect the reality of the world, and I think that's part of humanizing people, that's part of living in a community," Ma said.

COURTESY PHOTOS / CLAIRE ZHANG

The ISO show, one of the decade-long traditions of ISO tradition, continues to bring students together in an era of uncertainties.

Faculty vote to reduce credits needed to graduate, will debate restricting Latin honors

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the number of required J-Terms from four to two, and further explained the rationale for the changes.

"It promotes equity and creates a level playing field for all students regardless of access to AP and IB courses in high school," Mittell said. "And it equally allows all students, when planning for a tough semester, working on a thesis or dealing with unplanned, uncertain, unforeseen challenges, to reduce their course load to three or 3.5 credits up to twice in college."

Mittell stated that the credit reduction will allow a minority of students without AP or IB credits the same flexibility, and it is unlikely to increase the number of students graduating early.

Vice President of SGA Daniza Tazabekova '26 spoke to faculty in support of the proposal before debate began, urging them to consider the value of granting students flexibility.

"It is unlikely that a swarm of students will drop classes to party, or to network professionally, or ignore their education in alternative ways," Tazabekova said. "Reducing credits does not reduce rigor."

Miguel Fernández, the meeting's moderator and professor of Luso-Hispanic studies, then opened the floor for debate, inviting faculty to speak on the proposal. Most speakers were supportive of eliminating the option to count AP or IB credits to ensure equity among students, but some raised concerns about reducing credit requirements, expressing worry that students who take 34 credits would wind up taking fewer classes outside of their major, a cornerstone of a liberal arts education.

Multiple faculty members predicted that taking 34 credits would become normalized with the lowered requirements, to the detriment of students. They claimed that it has now become "normalized" for students to take only two J-Terms, despite that not having been the intention when the proposal to require only two Winter Term credits passed in 2004.

"The normalization [of 34 credits] is inevitable, as much as we would like it not to be," another professor added.

However, other faculty members cited how 65% of students currently earn four J-Term credits, and that half of the students who can take only 34 earn 36.

"The whole idea of normalizing 34 as the expected load is something that we are really not trying to do," Mittel said in defense of the proposal. "It is expected that students will pursue a full course load, leading to 36 credits."

The potential for students to use this requirement reduction to graduate early was also an objection, as well as possible impacts on enrollment. Currently, approximately 2% of students have accelerated graduation.

One faculty member suggested the college was heading in the wrong direction: They argued for removing AP and IB credits and keeping the requirement at 36 to increase the college's academic rigor.

"I wonder why you haven't considered leveling it up rather than down," the professor asked, questioning the effects of the reduction on enrollment. "Higher education is the only commodity where the buyer is willing to pay more and get less."

Some faculty thought that the vote was being rushed and said such a significant reduction requires more time to think through unforeseen outcomes, especially given the simultaneous discussions on distribution requirements.

"Thirty-six to 34 courses is a momentous change. It's probably the biggest single academic change we can make at this school," one professor said.

Members of the ad hoc Curriculum Distribution committee — the group tasked with reevaluating the distribution requirements — clarified that they would prefer to know what the new graduation requirements are as soon as possible so that they can better fit their potential adjustments within these parameters. Johnson added that the timing of this proposal and vote was intended to provide sufficient context for the committee's work.

The SGA launched a student survey yesterday to solicit student experiences with the distribution requirement system in order to inform the committee's upcoming proposals, according to Tazabekova, the SGA vice president.

Several faculty members who supported the proposal cited student well-being as a reason to provide more flexibility, and they encouraged other faculty to use their agency to advise students.

"It's been a rough four to six years. I feel like I've been directly engaged in conversations with many colleagues about how students are doing and, and what I would call a pretty severe work workload crisis that has affected a lot of our students," one faculty member stated.

Latin Honors

Following the vote, the assembled professors discussed a proposed change to the Latin honors system at graduation. Currently, more than 90% of Middlebury students graduate with some form of honors, with 56% graduating at the highest rank of summa cum laude, according to the Faculty Council presentation.

"We thought that if everybody gets honors, which we're close to, then that sort of means nobody's getting honors. And so we're simultaneously honoring everybody, but also not really honoring the most distinguished students," Johnson explained.

The faculty who spoke generally agreed on the need to amend the system to reduce the number of students entitled to graduate with the highest honors of the college. The Faculty Council's motion as currently written would restrict cum laude honors to the top 30% of graduating students, magna cum laude to the top 15% and summa cum laude to the top 2%.

The proposal would also restrict Dean's List honors to the top 15% of students who have taken four credits that semester, and it would remove valedictorian and salutatorian honors at graduation starting in spring 2025.

Some professors questioned the technical aspects of calculating the cutoffs for honors and the potential to create a competitive, adversarial environment surrounding grading. The proposal to change Latin honors will be considered in December at the next meeting of the faculty.

Editor's Note: Professor of Film and Media Studies Jason Mittell serves as faculty advisor to The Campus. He had no role in the publication of this article.

COLLEGE DONATES SECTION OF SNOW BOWL LONG TRAIL, PRESERVING PUBLIC ACCESS

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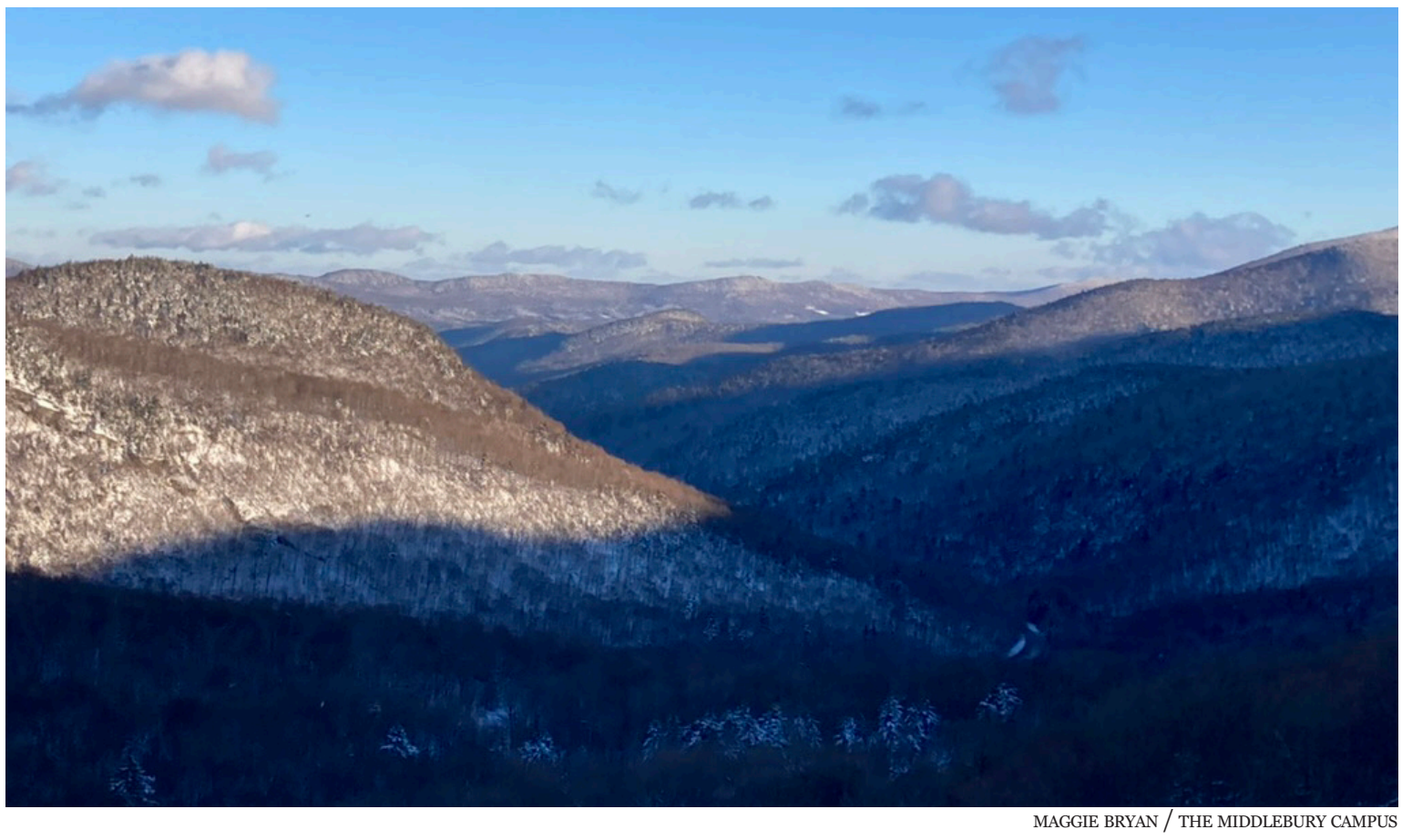


MAGGIE BRYAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Long Trail, which stretches across the top of the Snow Bowl, is a popular hiking spot for students.

other purposes. The action does not alter the ways in which the public interacts with the trail, but it clarifies the use of the land for recreation in perpetuity.

Marc Lapin, associate laboratory professor and college lands conservationist, mentioned past concerns over the development of the tract in an email to The Campus.

"Some aspects of concern that have led to the years-long process were related to exploring possibilities for wind turbine(s) to generate renewable electricity. The college has customarily favored leaving options open for land uses and management," he wrote.

From sunrise trips with Middlebury Mountain Club (MMC) to outdoor educational exploration along adjacent Lake Pleiad, the tract is beloved by the college community. MMC's Outdoor Trips Assistant Bernadette Osborn '26.5 explained the update will provide local access to a place to lead hikes and skinning ski tours.

"It is just really special to have a place so close to give us accessible adventures," she said. "As a club we use the trail rain or shine throughout all four seasons. For us it is pivotal to protect this strip of land to ensure continued MMC trips for future students."

The stretch of the trail has a long history with the college. Joseph Battell donated the area in 1916 as a plot of land without any specific designation for its usage, according to Vermont Public Radio. In 1936, the Snow Bowl opened its first ski trail, which was one of the first ski areas in Vermont. Later, in the 1940s and 1950s, the area began to be used more for its singular ski jump. Today, students enjoy the slopes year-round, for purposes ranging from summer picnics to the celebratory Feb graduation.

Through the college's emphasis on land protection and the foundations of the Land Stewardship Initiative, Middlebury says it is committed to interacting with their lands respectfully and sustainably in the interest of greater communities.

This land donation is one way to further bring together the community, according to Lapin, who explained how this donation furthers that institutional mission.

"The ROW (right-of-way) that the college granted to GMC for the Long Trail is something that has been discussed for years and it's wonderful to see that it is now official… I've heard of no "pushback" or resistance to the protection of the Long Trail through the Snow Bowl parcel," he wrote.

Though the commitment of the section of the Long Trail by the college to the GMC has been a verbal agreement for years, making the agreement formal has some additional benefits, according to Director of Business Services Matthew Curran, such as the added leeway granted to the GMC by the easement from the college.

"Now with this easement over 99% of the total long trail is under some easement, which allows them much more flexibility in maintaining the trail," Curran wrote in an email to The Campus. "The community should not notice any changes, with the exception that over time the trails may be better maintained for hikers."

PHOTOS OF THE WEEK

Study Abroad Photo Contest Winners

The Middlebury International Programs hosted the Study Away Photo Contest in the Davis Family Library Atrium last week, inviting students to vote on their favorite submission. The three winners were Saki Tsubouchi '25, Lucas Nerbonne '25.5 and Max Zeltsar '24.5, in that order; their photos will be displayed this year in Sunderland Language Center and permanently placed in Davis Family Library.

"The Soulful Gaze of Sápmi"

Saki Tsubouch '25

During my visit to Sápmi, the ancestral lands of the Sámi people in northern Norway, I found myself eye-to-eye with this reindeer. Its gaze speaks of centuries shared between humans and nature. Whose story do you hear?

"Horses Just North of the Arctic Circle"

Lucas Nerbonne '25.5

A herd of free-range horses on the Island of Grimsey, which lies 30 miles north of the Icelandic mainland and straddles the edge of the Artic Circle. These particular horses followed us for an hour and half, likely looking for treats.

"Roaring Lion"

Max Zeltsar '24.5

A female lion roaring as the sun rises over the plains of the Serengeti.

GREAT ART WEDNESDAY RETURNS TO TOWN HALL THEATER

By LILY JENSEN
Contributing Writer

Great Art Wednesday, the Town Hall Theater's (THT) monthly film series on art and architecture, has returned for the November–May season.

The films are shown on either the second or third Wednesday of the month at 11 a.m. in the main theater. With a new sound system in place and a large screen to show the films, the theater provides art-enthralled viewers with a movie theater-like experience.

Executive Director of THT Lisa Mitchell spoke about the theater's reasons for hosting the series.

"The genesis of it was the thought that we have audiences who love the arts beyond theater. And also we have daytime periods where we don't really have anything going on, so how could we create a series that happens in the daytime that becomes this community event around the arts?" Mitchell said in an interview with The Campus.

The 2024–25 season of Great Art Wednesday will look different from in previous years. While in the past, the films were typically only about fine artists, they will now also center architects.

Mitchell said that the theater decided to expand to films about architecture for two reasons: They have exhausted the catalog of visual art films from "Exhibition On Screen," a series by the London-based company Seven Art Productions from which they have been drawing films, and are inspired by the ongoing expansion project at the theater.

Mitchell, who has worked at the theater for five years, manages both the business team and develops programming. She selects the films for Great Art Wednesday, playing an important role in shaping each program.

"We started looking at what are the most interesting and engaging architecture films in recent history and did some research on that and sort of folded those in. We tried to pick ones with, in most cases where the names of the architects are known," Mitchell said. "It's inspired by our expansion because we've been living in this fun world of learning around architecture."

The average Great Art Wednesday attracts an audience of around 100 people, according to Mitchell.

"People are really excited. They look forward to these films. Before the film is played, they're, you know, chatting very animatedly about what's going on," Mitchell said.

While the series' current audiences are mostly comprised of retirees, Mitchell said that many young professionals and other Middlebury residents have requested a second viewing of the films for those who work during the day, which would also make the events more accessible to students at the college. Mitchell hopes to add that additional screening within the next few seasons of the series.

She also wants to expand Great Art Wednesdays to include documentaries on new art mediums like photography, and to focus on one specific topic or category in a given season, such as women painters.

The expansion project at the THT — which is funded by individual donors, Middlebury College, and state grants — is well underway and expected to be completed by January. While there is already a lot more to the THT than Great Art Wednesday, the project will allow the theater to hold even more events to attract the community to the arts. The new wing will be 9,000 square feet and will be backed away from the streetscape on Merchant's Row to ensure that it does not feel like a massive, imposing structure, according to Mitchell.

Mitchell spoke about how the project will mitigate the current challenges posed to the theater by space limitations. They currently do not have designated spaces for the 12 resident companies who regularly perform at the THT to rehearse, nor for set building, which requires the THT to close for 30% of the year. The upstairs of the new wing will be home to a studio attached to a bar and lounge, and will be available for event rentals or for performance and practice space, and will have an outdoor stage. The ground floor will be called the Center for Learning and Engagement and will hold both performing arts and non-performing arts classes for all ages every day of the week, and the basement will be home to a 'scene shop,' where sets can be built.

"We're kind of growing from a local theater to a regional performing arts center," Mitchell said.

She described Great Art Wednesday in particular as a chance to engage with the arts, noting that art is most powerful when it is made accessible.

"When people leave, they don't just leave," Mitchell said. "They actually mill about quite a lot. They'll, if the weather is not great, they will hang out in the lobby for a while and talk about the film and talk about what's going on."

NADIA HARE / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
The Town Hall Theater is located at 68 South Pleasant St.

ADDISON COUNTY ELECTS STEVEN HEFFERNAN TO STATE SENATE, OUSTING FIVE-TERM INCUMBENT

By MACY DAGGITT
Contributing Writer

In an unexpected twist in the race for the Vermont State Senate, Republican challenger Steve Heffernan defeated democratic incumbent Christopher Bray for one of Addison County's two senate seats. Heffernan's election was part of a larger victory for Republicans in the state legislature, picking up enough seats to effectively end the 20-year democratic supermajority.

Incumbent State Senator Ruth Hardy led the four candidates with 23.47% of the vote, followed closely by Heffernan at 23.33% — a difference of just 70 votes. Bray received just over 22% of the vote, while Republican Landel Cochran trailed all three with 16.5% of the vote. The 2024 election marked a major shift from just two years ago, when Bray and Hardy received 30% and 29% of the votes cast, respectively, and neither Republican challenger cracked 15%.

Heffernan spoke to The Campus about his campaign and his belief of why Vermonters were unsatisfied with the previous composition of the State Senate.

"The fuel tax and other tax hikes were the two most important issues when I spoke to people," Heffernan said. On his first day in office, Hefferenan plans to take on the Affordable Heat Bill, and rework it so that the legislation is aligned with what he sees as common sense and more affordable heating options for state residences. Having worked as an excavator in towns across Vermont, Heffernan believes he has his finger on the pulse of the needs of Vermonters and is ready to take action.

Heffernan said he faced some criticism from potential voters for not having a distinct plan for his term as a state senator but maintained his fresh perspective is important for the state legislature.

"This is one of my best attributes. I'm coming in with an open mind. I don't have an agenda, so I can look at each issue that is bothering Vermont with a new set of eyes," he said.

Heffernan explained that he will learn on the job after he is sworn in and begins working on issues facing Addison County, adding that he will attend community events and listen to the needs of his constituents.

On Election Day, voters ended the Democratic supermajority in the legislature and returned the closest partisan divide there since 2000, according to VTDigger.

Gov. Phil Scott, who was just reelected to a fifth term in a landslide, had argued strongly against the Democratic supermajority, going on the campaign trail to stump for Republican candidates in the legislature. Scott endorsed Steve Heffernan for the Addison County senate seat; the governor even went door-to-door on behalf of numerous Republicans vying to unseat Democratic legislators.

The Senate now has 16 Democrats and 13 Republicans, compared to 21 and 7 seats for each respective party in the previous two-year term. The House of Representatives saw Democratic numbers fall from 103 to 87, as Republicans gained almost 20 seats to reach their current 56-seat hold.

With a Republican governor and Democratic legislature, Scott faced significant challenges exerting executive power last session, as the Democratic senators and representatives would propose bills that he would routinely veto. However due to the Democrats' supermajority, they could then override his vetoes, ultimately curtailing his influence on the state's legislative agenda.

Scott expressed his frustration with the dynamic in Montpelier. Given the outcome of the State Senate election, Democrats no longer have the power to override the governor's veto, likely shifting the policy-making process and subsequent legislative outcomes over the next two years.

Heffernan said he believes that many Vermonters, especially the working class, have been dissatisfied with the Democratic supermajority's actions, leading to his victory.

Heffernan will join Hardy, the Democratic incumbent, to serve as the representatives of Addison County in the Vermont state senate upon their inauguration in January 2025.

Editor's Note: Addison County Senator Ruth Hardy is married to Film and Media Studies Professor Jason Mittell, who serves as The Campus' faculty advisor. He had no role in the publication of this article.

COURTESY PHOTO / RUTH HARDY
State Senator Ruth Hardy, whom Heffernan will join to represent Addison County in January after his inauguration.

COURTESY PHOTO / STEVEN HEFFERNAN
Steven Heffernan, who beat incumbent Christopher Bray for a state senate seat.

SPILLING THE AQUA VITEA:
Where Middlebury gets its kombucha fix

By MANDY BERGHELA
Senior Local Editor

For years, Aqua ViTea Kombucha has been a beloved, refreshing drink for Middlebury students. Recognizable by its vibrant, colorful packaging, it is a familiar sight at local businesses around town, as well as on campus at spots like Midd Xpress and Crossroads Cafe.

Founded by Jeff Weaber in 2007, Aqua ViTea started as a small venture, initially sold at the Middlebury Farmers Market on Exchange Street. However, the company's journey, however, started years earlier in 2003, when Weaber brewed his first batch of kombucha in an Oregon distillery. Inspired by the process, he and his wife Katina decided to bring the drink to the local area, launching Aqua ViTea in Salisbury, Vt.

Christopher Maloney, Aqua ViTea's Product Innovation Manager, explained that from the beginning, Weaber's vision was to create a healthier alternative to sports drinks and soda. This commitment to promoting a balanced, health-conscious lifestyle is at the core of Aqua ViTea's mission.

"That was the premise of why he started the company, and that vision has remained at the core of Aqua ViTea's commitment," Maloney said, adding that Aqua ViTea's kombucha is much lower in calories and sugar than most other brands.

In 2012, Aqua ViTea expanded to a larger facility in Bristol, Vt. to meet growing demand and reach a broader audience. Today, Aqua ViTea operates from 153 Pond Lane, a 63,000-square-foot facility in Middlebury purchased in 2017, formerly the location of Woodchuck Cider.

Brewing kombucha may be a hobby for some, but at Aqua ViTea, it is a large-scale operation. Each day, the company brews and stores approximately 5,000 gallons of kombucha — equivalent to around 50,000 12-ounce cans — making them one of the east coast's leading kombucha brewers.

The process of brewing begins with tea. Water and sugar are mixed together in order to make a simple sugar solution, according to Maloney.

"We use a combination of green and black tea," Maloney said. "We have to plan far in advance, so we source about 24,000 pounds annually. We also partner with Stone Leaf Tea House because they're experts in sourcing tea responsibly."

The tea is then steeped in a mash tun filled with hot water, capable of brewing up to 500 gallons at a time. The sugar solution is added directly to the hot tea in the mash tun, ensuring it dissolves evenly throughout the batch.

Next, the contents of the mash tun are transferred over to the fermentation tanks.

"The water, sugar, and tea go into the tanks with the SCOBY, which is the magic part of kombucha," Maloney said. "SCOBY stands for a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast. During fermentation the SCOBY, which lives in the tanks, consumes most of the sugar in the teas and your byproducts are heat, CO_2 and alcohol."

Next is the process of removing the alcohol. Not many other kombucha companies have such intricate technology, but Aqua ViTea upcycles up to 50 ml of alcohol per bottle. Federal regulation for malt beverages is 0.5% alcohol or less, and Aqua ViTea makes sure to stay well below this.

"We use something called the spinning column cone," Maloney explained. "This was originally used for the wine industry, when grapes can get really plump and full of sugar and that byproduct is a yeast with very alcoholic wine. Same process as here — the spinning column cone uses vacuum pressure to gently distill out the alcohol without harming the good stuff like yeast and the other good microbes you want in there for our kombucha. After that, the brewing process is finished."

The kombucha is then stored in large tanks until ready to be flavored and packaged. When an order is placed for a particular flavor, of which Aqua ViTea has nine, the kombucha is steeped with organically sourced fruit juices and herbs to create the desired flavor.

Aqua ViTea also sells its famous Aqua Seltzer. Launched in 2022, is a mixture of a probiotic seltzer and kombucha. It comes in Raspberry and Lime, Grapefruit and Thyme, Pomegranate and Cherry and Cucumber and Mint. The Aqua Seltzer, as Maloney describes it, is for those who may not enjoy the full kombucha taste but still want a "kick" from their seltzer.

From there, the kombucha is taken to the packaging section of the factory. It is either sold in cans, bottles, or kegs, with cans getting the most output: Maloney said that the facility can package 100 12 oz cans a minute.

Aqua ViTea is currently distributed across the nation in more than 23 states, and is present in over 3,000 stores.

Gaby Rosen '26's go to drink is the "blueberry social," but loves all flavors.

"When I want to treat myself to a nice drink, I buy Aqua ViTea's kombucha," Rosen said in an interview with The Campus. "Not only am I taking care of my health with my purchase, since kombucha is good for gut health, I also get to support a local Middlebury business. All and all it's a tasty drink that I can spend my money on guilt free."

Numi Moreno '26 said there is nothing that can match the taste and benefits of Aqua ViTea's kombucha.

"Strawberry sage flavor is always on top," Moreno said. "I genuinely think about it at least twice a week. It really helps me feel better and more in control of my gut health when I'm at Midd, especially because I used to drink a lot of kombucha back home since my mom makes it and I was really missing it until I tried Aqua ViTea."

Middlebury College students are encouraged to visit the Pond Lane location on Thursdays, as they can get a 20% discount from the brewery. Aqua ViTea does growler fills, can and bottle sales from 12 to 5 p.m. each Thursday.

MANDY BERGHELA / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
The can packaging process at the Aqua ViTea plant in Middlebury, Vt.

SPECS PANTHER: LOOKING AT AMERICAN SEXUAL HEALTH DISPARITIES THROUGH A RACIAL LENS

SPECS Panther is a mascot for SPECS (sex positive education for college students) and serves the Middlebury community. As a part of Health & Wellness Education, SPECS Panther seeks to educate and spark independent dialogue, not be the end-all be-all resource on campus. We encourage Midd Kids to break down the walls of silence by engaging in sex-positive conversation — wherever, with whomever, and about whatever is most comfortable, easy, and safe for you. Our editions will be educational!

Op-Ed

Charlotte Cebula *is a member of the class of 2025 and a SPECS Peer Educator.*

In 2017, American tennis star Serena Williams experienced life-threatening complications from childbirth. Her cover story profile for Vogue discussed her experience of having to convince medical professionals of the severity of her complications — what she described as undoubtedly a pulmonary embolism — and the delay in proper treatment. Her story sparked public outcry against existing inequalities in the American healthcare system that significantly favor white patients over Black patients. What people found especially shocking was that a person as famous as Serena Williams could also be the victim of racialized medical negligence. It uncovered a disturbing truth: Race intersects with, and can even trump, socioeconomic class as a health determinant.

As a demonstration, Vermont remains overwhelmingly white (91.9%) and Middlebury is undeniably a predominantly white institution (56%, as of Fall 2023), enabling a culture of silence of medical and sexual intersectionality. In fact, Black women in the U.S. are a staggering three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white patients. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 80% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable. Similarly, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are more prevalent in non-white populations, despite similar sexual habits across community lines. HIV stands out in this category, as the new rate of HIV diagnoses among Black adults and adolescents is approximately eight times that of white people and twice as high for Latinos. On campus, SPECS strives to join the efforts at addressing historical legacies and contemporary medical realities by promoting awareness and disrupting its associated stigma.

It is impossible to talk about the inadequacies of sexual and reproductive health for Black women without discussing its racialized history; reproductive history in particular is intertwined with racism and American slavery. In 1808, the U.S. government banned the importation of African people to serve as enslaved people in the U.S. Once viewing slaves as disposable, enslavers now had a vested interest in maintaining the fertility of enslaved Black women, whose offspring could maintain the capitalist slave economy. This gave way to a greater number of white male physicians specializing in gynecology, a field previously dominated by midwives and sequestered to the domestic sphere.

One such physician was Dr. James Marion Sims, who established a small surgical infirmary in Montgomery, Ala. in 1845 for medical experiments on female slaves. Sims is now widely regarded as the father of American gynecology. He is attributed with pioneering the practice of repairing the vesico-vaginal fistula and developing the vaginal speculum. His work relied on enslaved women, whom he used as both subjects and trained nurses. Without anesthesia, these patients endured extreme physical pain and abuse. Sim's work, and that of countless other doctors, hinged on the myth of higher pain tolerance of Black people. The chilling history of gynecology is a painful reminder of the intersectionality of sexual health and race; sexual health practices as we know them today could not exist without the exploitation of Black communities.

The centuries following Sims' experimentation were wrought with continued abuse of Black communities. Perhaps the most well-known example is the Tuskegee Syphilis Study from 1932 to 1972, during which hundreds of Black men with syphilis were unknowingly withheld treatment (even though penicillin was introduced in 1943) as they were the "control" group in a study of the untreated STI. Government researchers sought to study the occurrence of syphilis in Black men, and originally told the mainly poor, Black sharecroppers that they had 'bad blood' — both misleading and decontextualized. Many of these patients and their infected family members died from the otherwise treatable infection. The U.S. Public Health Service and the CDC were complicit and instrumental in the operation and continuation of this study.

The communities most exploited by the US healthcare system are the least likely to receive its care and benefits. Rather, as the medical field has weaponized the sexuality of Black communities, it led to increased stigma surrounding sexual health, less access to sexual healthcare and broader distrust of medical professionals as a result of historical precedent. Despite evidence that disproves the theory, physicians are more likely to underestimate — and avoid treating — pain expressed by Black patients compared to nonblack patients. Slavery-era medical myths, such as that of hypersexuality and higher pain tolerance in Black women, continue to permeate both culture and medicine. Moreover, Black communities are less likely to receive comprehensive sex education, often primarily being taught abstinence-only education.

Historical abuses coupled with current inequities in sex education are at the root of alarming STI and pregnancy-related death statistics. SPECS recognizes that there are existing systems of oppression that affect one's ability to obtain accurate sexual information, center consent and pleasure, and ultimately participate in a sex-positive environment. In an era marked by division and tension, it is up to our generation to acknowledge historical legacies, stand up for and empower vulnerable groups, and ultimately demand cultural, medical, educational and political change.

In the words of Harriet A. Washington in "Medical Apartheid," systemic injustice in medical research "has played a pivotal role in forging the fear of medicine that helps perpetuate our nation's racial health gulf." We must heed her warning and not leave these racialized disparities unchallenged.

LET SOCIAL HOUSES BE SOCIAL

Op-Ed

Marco Volpitta *is a member of the class of 2024.5.*

I joined Omega Alpha — more commonly known as Tav — three years ago. Last year I became the president. I've watched as increasing regulation has prevented social houses from creating community spaces and recruiting new members.While a return to the system of fraternities is neither being discussed nor desirable, Middlebury College should allow the social houses to operate more independently and to demand more from their members in order to create spaces that can better build community within the school.

The purpose of the social houses is to provide a space on campus that gives students opportunities to participate in a close community. The campus at large clearly can't provide this — when was the last time that any campus-wide event at Midd pulled in even a small fraction of the student body? Providing opportunities for close-knit groups is key to a vibrant campus social life, and social houses provide that in a way other clubs do not. Social houses currently face restrictions on almost every aspect of their existence, particularly their abilities to host events and recruit members. It would be difficult to find a student who has never been in Tav basement, and social house parties with hundreds of attendees are not uncommon. But social houses can, and should, do much more than throw parties on the weekends.

Events for members such as game nights, house meetings or just opportunities to hang out as a group are key to forming tightly-knit communities. However, the requirement to register every event with the Student Activities Office (SAO), the prohibition on holding unregistered events and the lengthy, sometimes week-long process for registering an event hamper the creation of a close community. Having to plan social engagements days in advance makes it difficult to take advantage of momentary opportunities. While beautiful fall weather could make for a perfect time to have a house hangout in the courtyard, by the time you've received the three separate approvals for the event, there might be snow on the ground.

The process of approval can also feel arbitrary and purposefully opaque. The SAO and Middlebury Events Management, who review event applications, do not communicate consistently about our events. Multiple times this semester, Tav has gotten the first two necessary approvals for an event only to be told days later that the third required approval had not been granted. The process feels capricious. For example, when applying for approval on a party this semester, we were denied one of the approvals because it was during the recruitment phase, and parties were not allowed as part of that process. We wrote in bold on the application that the party was unrelated to the recruitment process and recruits would not be allowed to attend in order to comply with school policy. It still took days to resolve. For any reader who visited Tav basement the last Saturday of October — and I know many did — that event nearly didn't happen because an administrator couldn't be bothered to read the application.

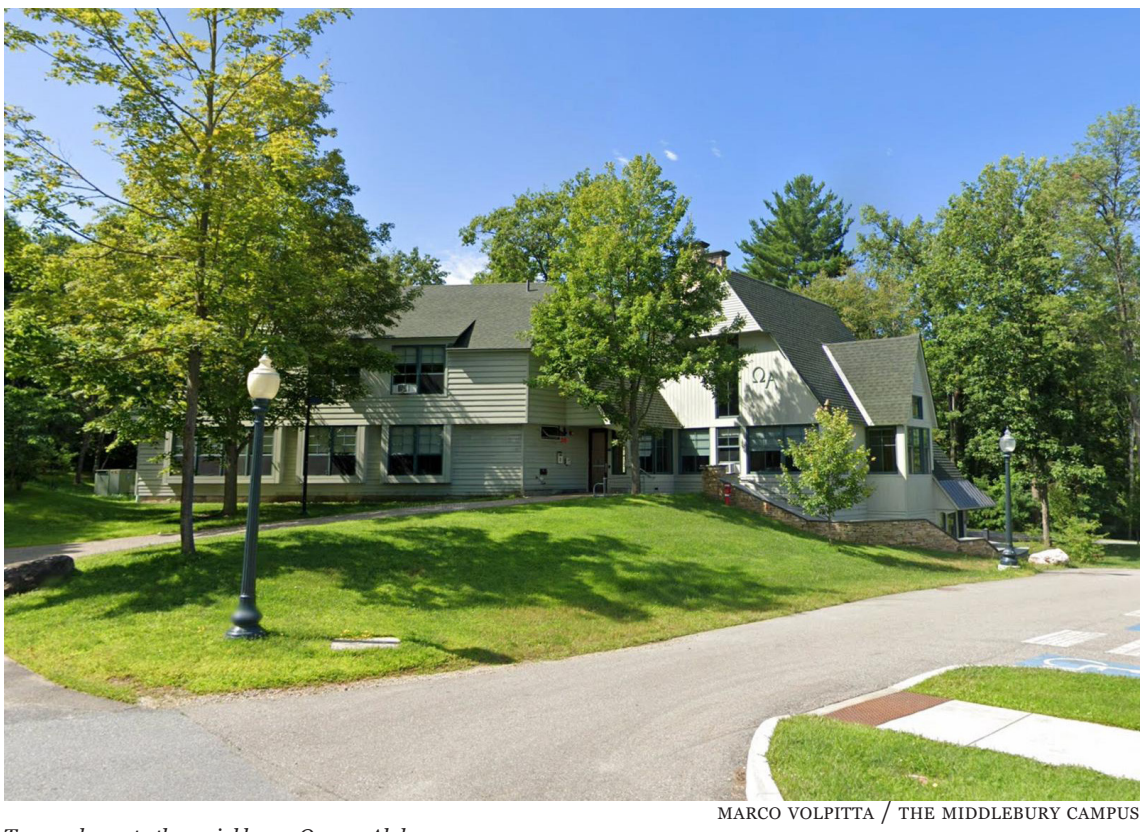
As institutions with nearly 100% turnover every four years, social houses rely on strong recruitment processes to bring new members in and integrate them into the house. This turnover can make it difficult to craft community, as other recent op-eds have noted. The social house recruitment process is naturally restricted by the administration, as it has the potential to go wrong in ways that reflect poorly upon the school. Many of the regulations on the process make sense; others are mandated by state law. The prohibition on alcohol during recruitment, for example, exists to protect the school, new members and the social houses themselves.

That being said, social houses must be able to demand commitment from their members for that membership to mean something. Current restrictions at Middlebury go far past state law, and our campus is poorer for it. If just signing up for a "New Member Education Process" guarantees entry and all the benefits that this membership entails, then there is no reason to actually engage with the house consistently, and no true integration into a community. It's no wonder that the process doesn't produce committed members.

Social houses should be able to set the length of their education process, when it occurs in the semester, and to compel a level of attendance in that process. None of these things are possible now. Recruitment is limited to a predetermined, two week period, and the total process needs to be limited in terms of the number and length of events to prevent time commitment from being too high, according to the SAO. While the limit for the amount of time a process can be planned for isn't specified, Tav's original recruitment plan last year called for less than an hour each day for two weeks, with one two-hour session on a weekend. It was rejected for being too time-consuming. Without that commitment however, the process can't hope to integrate new people into the house.

I remember recruitment as one of the highlights of my Middlebury experience. I was in that basement, almost every day, for three weeks. That commitment tied me irreversibly to the house. Just a few years ago, Tav could reliably count on 40–50 people to show up for a weekly update meeting. Now, we're lucky to get ten, and I think that the drastic change in expectations surrounding the process of becoming a member is responsible for that.

The goal of creating social spaces not tied to a particular sport or organization is a noble one, and forms an important part of community living here at Middlebury. But if we want that to extend past the occasional Friday or Saturday night party, we need to rethink the regulatory structures that these organizations are beholden to. We must let them actually create communities. Making events easier to host and allowing social houses to demand participation from members as a condition of membership would allow for stronger, more vibrant communities that existed not so long ago.



MARCO VOLPITTA / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Tavern, home to the social house Omega Alpha.

VOTE YES IN THE HONOR CODE REFERENDUM THIS MONTH

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Last month, the Honor Code Review Committee (HCRC) sent out an email alerting students of proposed changes to the Honor Code. These proposals are the culmination of three semesters of meetings, surveys, and feedback from students, faculty and administrators. Based on the findings of their report from last May, the committee proposed five recommendations to improve the honor code: regularly and publicly affirming the definition and significance of academic integrity; eliminating the moral obligation for students to report their peers' infractions; clarifying the way in which student violations are adjudicated, especially with regard to faculty involvement; permitting faculty to proctor exams, should they so desire, in compliance with ADA requirements; and clarifying if and when the use of AI violates the honor code.

Of these proposals, two — the moral obligation to report and the option for professors to proctor exams in all departments — will be voted on by the student body. A third item, not included in the report's recommendations, will also be brought to a vote; this proposal asks whether to replace suspension as the default punishment for an honor code infraction with a range of punitive actions that may include suspension. To update the honor code, two-thirds of all currently enrolled students must vote in a referendum opening on Nov. 15, and two thirds of those who vote must support the proposed alterations.

By and large, we support all five proposed changes to the Honor Code. However, two-thirds is an ambitious portion of the student body to convince to fill out the survey, and a lack of participation would be detrimental to these items ever passing. We call on students to take a moment to fill out the survey when it comes out tomorrow and vote for all four proposals. This is an essential step in the Honor Code becoming adequately responsive and productive towards student and faculty needs.

Middlebury's vision of the honor code is a rosy one: Academic integrity as a centerpiece of the student experience, sustained by a social contract that holds students accountable to one another. Unfortunately, this vision does not come close to the current reality. According to Zeitgeist 6.0, 65% of students admit to breaking the honor code, and only 34% of them feel guilty about it. This widespread ambivalence feeds into a self-perpetuating cycle; as more students disregard the honor code without consequence, the norm of academic integrity erodes further. This cycle doesn't have to continue.

Several peer institutions such as Haverford College place a greater emphasis on integrating their honor system into campus culture. The upcoming vote on the Honor Code is only one way we should seek to include students in a culture of academic integrity. Across our varying first year experiences, some of which were affected by Covid-19, not everyone had an official Honor Code signing ceremony and learned about the pledge in far less ceremonious ways, like from a syllabus in class. If Middlebury College expects its students to follow honorable academic standards, it should give us the opportunity to understand and appreciate their value first. The Honor Code should mean much more to us than a last-minute copy-and-pasted statement at the bottom of our essays; It should remind us of a promise we made and continue to make to ourselves and our classmates to uphold academic honesty for the greater good of our community and institution's integrity.

The individual responsibility of each student to follow the Honor Code should not be considered equivalent to policing the integrity of each other's work, as the committee found in its report. Most students aren't even aware of the "moral obligation" that the code prescribes to report other students for potential violations. Even when they are aware of their responsibility, in our experience students are often reluctant to take action against their peers because doing so goes against the trusting relationship the Honor Code is meant to reinforce. As Middlebury struggles to build a community across classrooms, the last thing we need is another reason to be in competition with one another.

We also agree that it is necessary to clarify how an honor code violation is adjudicated. Currently, the official process by which a student is disciplined is awkward and often entirely ignored. Because the reporting system for Honor Code infractions is ineffective, some professors choose to take matters into their own hands and discipline students within the bounds of their own course, undermining the entire system.

Alongside a procedural update, we suggest that professors remind students of the honor code at the start of each semester, even in upper level classes where students are likely to be familiar with it. Consequences for plagiarism in post-graduate life are far more dire than at Middlebury, and a community that emphasizes academic integrity will prepare students more effectively for the real world. Even for students who skip postgraduate studies and pursue anything from investment banking all-nighters to traveling with the Peace Corps, knowing right from wrong is essential to working in any professional community.

Another proposal of the upcoming vote — permitting faculty to proctor exams at their own discretion — seems like an obvious and easy intervention to prevent cheating. Many students have observed cheating during unproctored exams; the issues were so pervasive that Economics had to request a department-wide exemption to proctor its exams. Having professors sit in the front of a classroom is an effective deterrent to cheating that will keep students honest and level the playing field in testing.

With respect to the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom, we understand that faculty are concerned about the potential for AI to undermine academic integrity and the atmosphere around learning in general. Some departments, however, already use AI — to debug code in computer science courses, for example — and a blanket restriction on AI would hamper some student learning. As such, we agree with the recommendation of the review committee: Since the value of AI varies by discipline, professors should have the final say as to whether AI can be used in their class. We encourage faculty to research AI and how it could assist or impede particular pedagogical objectives, and to provide clear examples in class for when the use of AI in their classes constitutes plagiarism. The technology is here to stay; to shun its use and ignore its existence runs counter to the entire ethos of a liberal arts education.

We support the committee's intention to reform the Honor Code, fostering a more honest academic environment for future Middlebury students. However, we also noted that the student survey only received 53 student responses last spring, suggesting that students do not always want to take time out of their busy schedules to weigh in on the Honor Code.

However, this month, we ask that you do exactly that. Take five minutes to read over the Honor Code Review Committee's three recommendations, weigh the options and then cast your vote in the upcoming referendum. Voting opens tomorrow and runs through Dec. 9. Use this opportunity to voice your opinion on the Honor Code. Whether you are an earnest first year who just signed the pledge on your first midterm or a jaded Super Senior looking towards the exit — and whether we like it or not — the Honor Code is the foundation of our education at Middlebury.

The Middlebury Campus

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TAKE A PAGE: WHY I JOURNAL

Op-Ed

Madeleine Kaptein *is a member of the class of 2025.5 and a Managing Editor at The Campus.*

As the days shorten and I start to feel I'm losing myself a little bit, I've taken some time to read old entries from the journals I've kept since I was 13 years old. I can hardly remember a time when I wasn't inclined to open a notebook, write the date at the top and describe the happenings of that day and what I thought about them. While my first ever entry was essentially just a list of my middle-school insecurities, the habit stuck and evolved into writing down long-winded stories about my experiences, short anecdotes of notable interactions, interesting things people say to me, reviews of what I have been reading, taped-in receipts and tickets, and introspective reflections.

Journaling has shaped my life for the better, and I want to use this op-ed to share how and why I think it is such a valuable practice.

Writing down my life story as it unfolds reminds me that it is worth telling. Placing "narrations" of my days, the "characters" surrounding me and the "subplots" I lead on paper keeps me bound to the greater purpose of living a rich internal and external life. It helps me fight my introverted, sometimes hermit-like instincts; saying yes to a spontaneous road trip or cold-plunge feels more tempting when I know it will mean my journal will be filled with recounts of events rather than mundane reflections on staying in my room.

Having recorded my day-to-day over the years means I can re-immerse myself in obscure segments of my past. When I open to July 2019, I find descriptions of sitting in the backseat of my group Driver's Ed car, when I gazed out the window at the lowly city streets of Rochester, N.Y., taking mental note of the prettiest houses and feeling sympathy for my classmate with the miles-long legs who had to sit in the cramped middle seat. When school was canceled in the spring of 2020, I apparently spent hours a day watching and thinking about "That 70's Show" and riding my bicycle around my suburban neighborhood between Zoom classes. In the fall of 2021, I stayed with relatives in the Netherlands and paddle boarded through the narrow canals of the tiny Dutch village where my family owned a water sport shop, waving back to the retirees who sat in their carefully-curated backyards. Like a time capsule, preserving the finer details of memories that may otherwise be lost is endlessly rewarding.

But not every entry from the past nine years is charmingly nostalgic to read. Some are painful. They take me back to times when I wasted energy in the wrong places with the wrong people, made a regrettable choice, or just plainly felt sad. But as many of these moments feel far away, I can both learn from them and remind myself that what I am currently living — and writing — is only a single chapter, and that it will someday enter the rear-view as ink on a page, for better or for worse.

MADELEINE KAPTEIN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
One of Madeleine Kaptein '25.5's journals.

While I can see how I have changed and matured, it is also easy to monitor what has stayed the same, and therefore what defines me when I forget where my edges are. It comforts me to see concrete evidence that the same things have always brought me joy. I have entries from my teenage years romanticizing a college life of interesting classes, living with my best friends, coffee shops and working on a newspaper that is not so far from the one I have now. The curiosity, desire for independence and blunt, situational humor I still carry with me can all be found in the muck of my early writing.

My journals are a place to reflect and express myself without fear of judgment, to work out muddled thoughts I'm unsure of, to consolidate a vague idea or plan on a page and to be as dramatic as I please. Until I have journaled, I feel I am treading water. Once I've written out the words that have piled up in my mind, I can steadily stand on shore.

Many of us at Middlebury write, but this writing is almost always intended to be polished, wiped out of our laptops and eventually replaced with something better. If you've ever thought about journaling, I encourage you to try it. You will thank yourself for casting your thoughts onto the page and recording your stories in a raw, unchangeable form, conscious of no eyes but your own.

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Horror and Humor: Middlebury College Musical Theatre's "Little Shop of Horrors"

By WENDY WANG
Contributing Writer

A perfectly spooky end to the Halloween season, Middlebury College Musical Theatre's fall production of "Little Shop of Horrors" ran at the Town Hall Theater (THT) for three consecutive nights, thrilling audiences with its blend of humor, emotion and terror.

"Little Shop of Horrors", a horror-comedy rock musical, is loosely based on a 1960 black comedy film by the same name, featuring music by Alan Menken with lyrics and storyline from Howard Ashman's novel. Menken's music, with its diverse mix of rock and roll, Doo-wop, and early Motown, creates a fast-paced, vibrant atmosphere, expertly presented by the talented student actors of Middlebury College Musical Theatre (MCMT).

MCMT is Middlebury's entirely student-run musical theater group, which handled every element of production — from singing and acting to design and direction. Each semester, they produce a new piece that showcases the talent, professionalism and passion of Middlebury students, never ceasing to amaze audiences. "Little Shop of Horrors" was no different.

The musical tells the peculiar story of Seymour, a timid flower shop assistant who discovers an unusual plant that he names "Audrey II" after his crush. This strange plant brings fame and fortune to the struggling shop, but at a terrible cost: Audrey II is carnivorous, feeding on human flesh and blood. As the plant demands more human sacrifices in exchange for Seymour's success, Seymour faces a moral dilemma, forced to weigh his ambition against his conscience. The musical, with its whimsically loose logic, explores the universal themes of ambition, love and the lengths one might go to achieve their dreams.

Notable directorial choices by Jonathan Mount '25.5 brought the production to life. Despite operating on a relatively small stage, the actors and directors utilized the space to its maximum, employing curtains for smooth scene transitions and cleverly defining different locations. Even the actors themselves were used to their fullest potential.

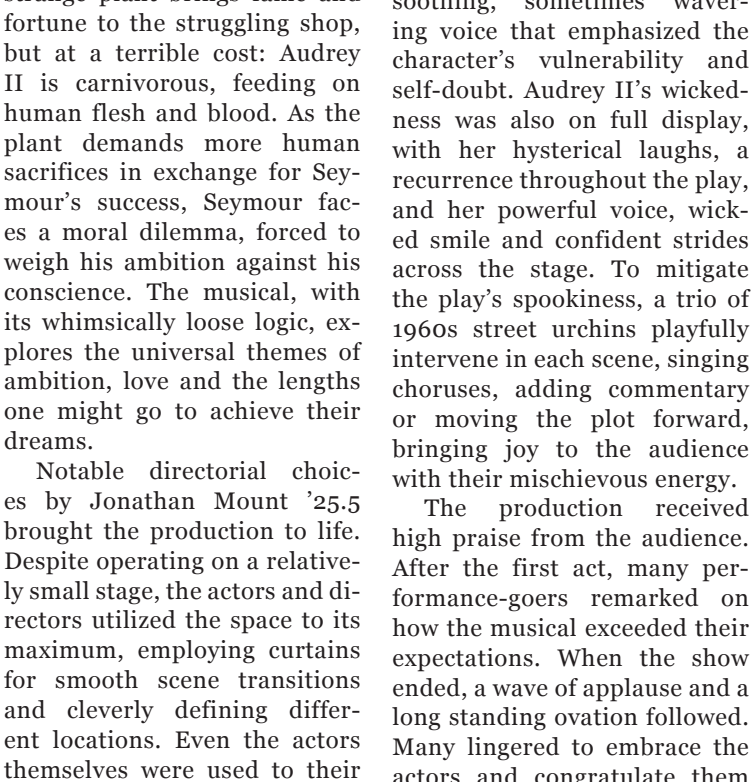
Quinn Donaldson '26.5 was charged with playing a multitude of different minor characters, which prompted laughter as the audience marveled at his impressive versatility. Moreover, the lighting is exceptional, changing in accordance with Seymour's inner turmoil. Blue lighting signals Seymour's solitude and heightens his touching performance. And when Audrey II awakes blood-thirsty, a sinister and pulsing red light bathes her green silhouette; the sharp contrast of colors adds to the scene's emotional tension as she savagely devours her victims.

Additionally, the costumes, especially those of Audrey II, are worth recognition. The plant evolves from a small plant in a pot played by a hand puppet, to a full-grown woman played by Gabriela Rosen '26 whose attire upgrades each time she feasts. Rosen had vine-like makeup and braided hair to emphasize her character. Her clothing begins as a rather simple green dress stained with red and embroidered with leaves, and then later transforms into a somewhat Victorian night-gown-esque green dress with a bright red corset. As the play crescendos, Audrey II's dress becomes a grand gown with a crown, marking her rise to power.

All the actors demonstrated remarkable professionalism and delivered outstanding performances. Seymour, the protagonist, played by Nathan Bernazzani '27, balanced a meek, docile nature with ambition and romantic yearning, brilliantly conveying his inner conflict and guilt. Audrey, played by Mars Romero '27, sang in a high, soothing, sometimes wavering voice that emphasized the character's vulnerability and self-doubt. Audrey II's wickedness was also on full display, with her hysterical laughs, a recurrence throughout the play, and her powerful voice, wicked smile and confident strides across the stage. To mitigate the play's spookiness, a trio of 1960s street urchins playfully intervene in each scene, singing choruses, adding commentary or moving the plot forward, bringing joy to the audience with their mischievous energy.

The production received high praise from the audience. After the first act, many performance-goers remarked on how the musical exceeded their expectations. When the show ended, a wave of applause and a long standing ovation followed. Many lingered to embrace the actors and congratulate them on the musical's success.

MCMT's "Little Shop of Horrors" was the perfect way to close the Halloween season with a touch of humor and warmth that will carry into the coming winter.



COURTESY PHOTO / FINN ELLINGWOOD

Right: Mars Romero '27 and Nathan Bernazzani '27 deliver rousing performances in "Little Shop of Horrors".
Left: Gabriela Rosen '26 dressed to the nines as Audrey II.

REEL CRITIC: "EMILIA PÉREZ"

By GAVIN RICHARDS
Contributing Writer

What strikes one most upon viewing "Emilia Pérez", which first premiered at the Cannes Film Festival last May, is its resistance to description. The film, starring Karla Sofía Gascón in the titular role as a transgender woman looking to leave her life as a notorious cartel boss, uses conventions from several genres to create a proud mongrel of a film.

It is, at first, a crime movie — the story of a successful lawyer lured into corruption by Mexico's robust drug scene. Soon after that, the film centers on Emilia's coming-out story. Then the film skips four years and becomes a family drama, focusing on Emilia's attempts to reconnect with her children. This plotline develops into a redemption narrative, which escalates into her creation of an non-governmental organization dedicated to the recovery of missing victims who were killed as a result of drug-related violence. Not only this, but the film is also a musical with operatic tendencies and complex choreography told in an unabashedly melodramatic tone. Needless to say, there is a lot going on in this film.

And herein lies the film's greatest strength: its ambition. For an industry that has long depended on the replication of commercial successes as a mainstream production practice, it is refreshing to see work that prioritizes originality and innovation rather than mimicry (the film is, admittedly, an adaptation, but it's only an expansion of a minor character in a recent novel, "Écoute" by Boris Razon). One cannot help but smile at the massive scope with which Audiard approaches this film. His outsized directorial imprint on the story exudes passion, care and respect for the medium and for the subject matter of Emilia's journey and her overall redemption.

But it is Audiard's same ambition that creates some of the biggest problems for "Emilia Pérez". Too often the film tries to balance disparate genre conventions that, in the end, undermine the overall impact of the story. Emilia's coming-out journey, for example, is framed with comedic undertones that clash with the dramatic importance of her story (i.e. by exploiting the contrast between the supposedly 'masculine' cartel boss and her desire to receive gender-affirming care as a woman). The moral dilemma Emilia faces — between abandoning her family and prioritizing her identity — and the aftermath of her decision cheapens the melodramatic tone of the film, which exposes Emilia's inner life and, in turn, ignores the hidden guilt that would come as a result of that decision.

This is the same reason that the musical aspect of the film can sometimes feel unnatural; it tries to evoke the rich interiorities of the characters when subtext and silence could do more to impact the audience.

That is not to say that the film's musical register fails entirely. There are many moments when the music, written by Clément Ducol and Camille, is able to create a sense of surrealism and achieve the operatic magnitude Audiard intended for the film (like in "El Mal").

Combined with a sleek, dark color palette to both start and end the movie, "Pérez" effectively captures the rise and fall of the titular character in a Mexico that is reeling from the effects of drug trafficking and related violence.

This is ultimately where the film finds itself most compelling. Although "Emilia Pérez" is the story of one woman in and of herself, she also seems to represent something much greater. Her journey becomes symbolic of a larger cultural shift, one in which the individual and the collective must confront their pasts in order to build a more sustainable future.

Both Emilia and the state of Mexico experience a redemption throughout the film; just as Emilia commits to change and leaves behind a life of violence, the film's representation of Mexico shows a country looking to amend the mistakes of its past. In this way, both Emilia the character and "Emilia" the film represent, first, a call to action and, second, a declaration of change in Mexico. It remains our job to listen up.

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20 YEARS OF "FROM A BASEMENT ON THE HILL"

By OSCAR DE SWAAN ARONS
Contributing Writer

In some ways, it's hard not to treat "From a Basement on the Hill" as Elliott Smith's suicide note. When Smith stabbed himself in the heart in his Los Angeles apartment on Oct. 21, 2003, his sixth studio album was largely completed, save some mixing and tracklist decisions. Smith's death, while absolutely shattering, came with something of a haunting inevitability. Whispered confessions about depression and addiction had long characterized his style, with listeners drawn to a morose beauty woven between the lines. Nonetheless, eyes turned when the LP was released a year after his death, either for answers or consolation.

Emerging from the Portland, Oregon underground scene in the early '90s, Smith found solace in louder rock, serving as the frontman for alt-rock band Heatmiser before his acoustic singer-songwriter tunes found him locally lionized. On his first and second records, "Roman Candle" and "Elliott Smith", respectively, dark and confrontational lyrics with muddled acoustics are riddled with Smith's signature picking style. A sound more akin to Nick Drake, Smith dared to step outside of the northwest zeitgeist of the time – dominated by the rise of grunge and sludge acts such as Nirvana and the Melvins. 1997's "Either/Or" flung him into the mainstream, with multiple songs being featured in "Good Will Hunting", released that same year. The newfound resources acquired after his commercial success, coupled with a motivation to develop his sound, spurred the development of his next two LPs, "XO" and "Figure 8", boundary-pushing albums that saw instrumental revelations.

The opening track on "From a Basement", , "Coast to Coast", begins with an anxious string section, before a sonorous and strident mix of guitar and drums set the tone for a rehashing of rock sounds heard less frequently since "XO". In the years before his death, Smith's drug-fueled depressive episodes convinced him that distancing himself from his friends was best for them, and lyrics such as "still, you're keeping me around, till I finally drag us both down" portray this inceptive track as a letter to them. Raucous noises also find themselves on tracks four and five, "Don't Go Down" and "Strung Out Again", the first of which seems to be Elliott's direct response to any critics who said "Figure 8" lacked his signature storytelling eloquence. An arpeggiated, dissonant lead guitar floats a tale of a dependent relationship, from the point of view of the abuser — it's a chilling listen with some of Smith's most powerful delivery. After his death, Smith's family brought in Rob Schnapf, who'd worked on "Figure 8", to finish the album's mixing. If any of these three tunes were not already completed, the less dynamic and more stagnant droning caught at times point to an aversion from Schnapf to make daring choices on behalf of Smith. Smith was known to make songs in an instrumentally flawless image, and then purposely imperfect them, chopping up timings and notes to create a less produced sound. On "Shooting Star", three drum kits play in misaligned timings, and fans trying to learn Smith's songs will find themselves detuning their guitars, all for the sake of authenticity. There remains a distinct difference between the two, however, and where "From a Basement" rocks the hardest, it also lacks the intentionality typically associated with Smith.

Smith was the master of the acoustic ballad, and that shines through on "From a Basement" almost as well as on any of his other works. "Let's Get Lost" and "Twilight" stand tall here, the latter unspooling a relationship mired by addiction in slow, disconsolate refrains. Repeated listens only blur the line on whether the relationship is external, or between Smith and his own troubled psyche; "pretty soon you'll find it's the only, little part of your life you're keeping together". "A Fond Farewell", track six, functions as Smith's unsent breakup letter to the drugs he struggled with in his final years, commencing with a realization — "the litebrite's now black and white, cause you took apart a picture that wasn't right" — a poignant acknowledgment of the problem without confrontation. The chorus repeats "this is not my life, it's just a fond farewell to a friend", as Smith attempts to convince himself he's distinguished from his actions.

Smith often referenced The Beatles among his biggest influences, and while the whimsy of "Magical Mystery Tour" and "Sgt. Pepper's" could be traced to "Figure 8", whiffs of melancholic McCartney are more present on "From a Basement". Intonations from the Liverpudlians' "Michelle" and "I'm So Tired" are glaringly obvious on "Little One", while "Memory Lane", a two-faced ballad that delivers heart-rending lyrics on a light, yet extremely technical guitar part, is emblematic of a George Harrison "Abbey Road" tune.

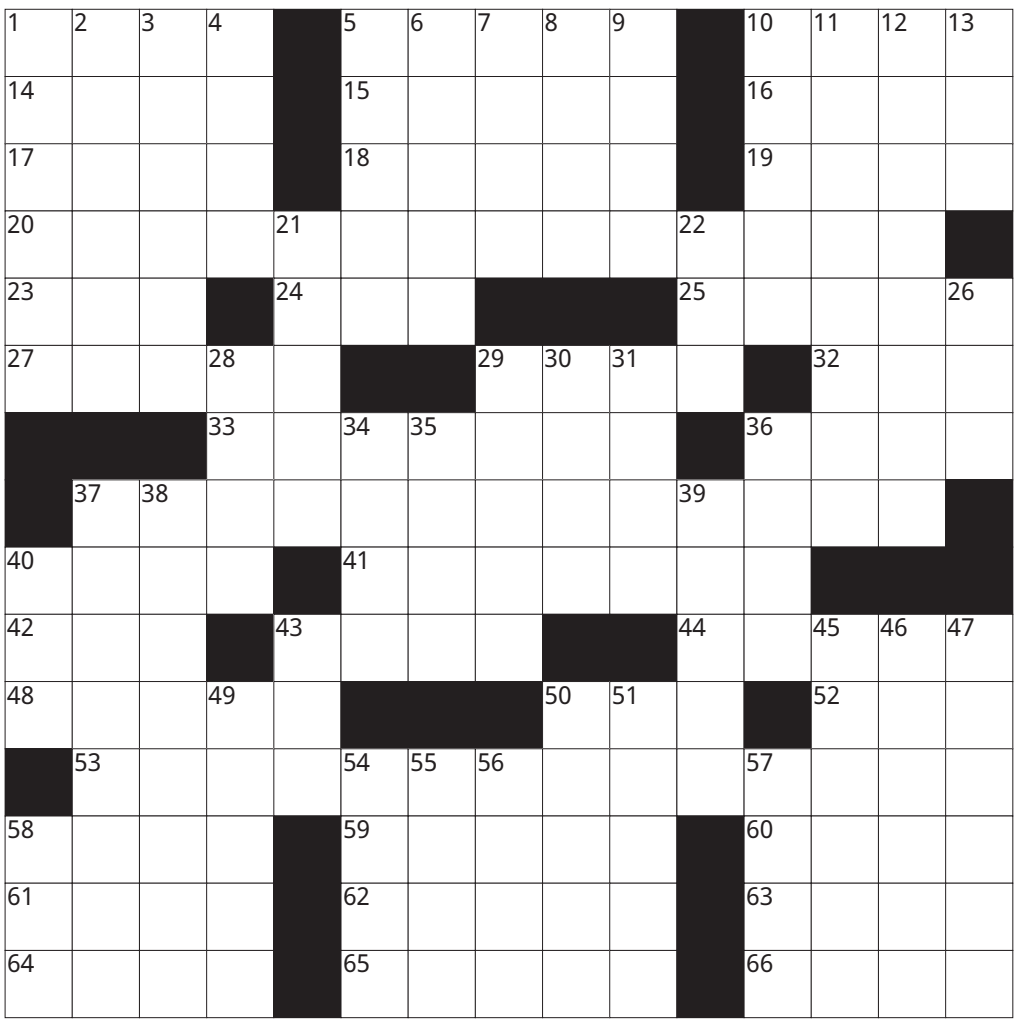
COURTESY PHOTO / ELLIOTT SMITH

Track seven, "King's Crossing", is without a doubt the masterpiece of "From a Basement", and perhaps Smith's magnum opus. Lyrics from the song have been traced back over a decade before its release, and one could assume he spent all that time refining them. The song is a slow burn — the first words aren't spoken until a minute and a half in — but when they commence, it feels like a tuxedoed Smith leads us through his life, portraying each tragedy and climax with Chaplinesque efficacy. The song is an impenitent image of Elliott at his highest highs and lowest lows. As the second verse ends, Smith belts "Give me one good reason not to do it, so do it"-- a gut punch that listeners are given time to cogitate during the bird noises of mid-album interlude, "Ostriches and Chirping".

"From a Basement" is equally intriguing for what it is and what it is not, what it gives us and what it does not. Controversy surrounding the post-mortem mixing process left many recordings off the album, and experimental techniques — such as shifting multiple songs from mono to stereo midway — were never implemented. However, what we're left with doesn't break from the trend Smith set with his first six LPs, a tracklist that both refines and pushes the boundaries of his sound. It's not his suicide note — that's a reductive interpretation that could be said of any of his LPs in good context. Rather, "From a Basement on a Hill" stands as an artistic achievement that demands to be appreciated, without any discoloration from listeners' premonitions about his tragic demise. In this case, it's not a fond farewell, it's just his life.

Recess

Winter Heaton



ACROSS
1 Wish receiver
5 Place for a massage
10 Nile reptiles
14 Fatty tuna
15 "The Simpsons" dad
16 Sandy hue
17 "Two fives for ___?"
18 Montoya in "The Princess Bride"
19 Go-getter
20 Playground game involving two teams
23 Notable period
24 Grand Teton's st.
25 Vail alternative
27 Sidekick of Mario and Luigi
29 Oktoberfest quaff
32 Nest egg letters
33 Draw Two or Skip
36 Zero, in tennis
37 Ornithologist's favorite kids' game?
40 Cereal partner
41 Carnivorous houseplant
42 Class with paints
43 Library ID
44 Following
48 Fender guitar model, familiarly
50 Nature Valley morsel
52 Suffix with pay and Cray
53 Like 20- and 37-Across, but with a banner
58 Teri of "Tootsie"
59 Urgency
60 Nerve network
61 ___-Ball (arcade game)
62 "Coffee ___?"
63 Frankfurt's river
64 Ties the knot
65 Caught wind of
66 Deities

DOWN
1 Dash of "Clueless"
2 Miyazaki's forest spirit
3 Venezuelan breakfast fare
4 Weasley and Howard
5 Like polished boots
6 Ski-resort rental, perhaps
7 "The Kite Runner" protagonist
8 Toy building brick
9 "No ___!" ("Sure thing!")
10 Yellow-fever mosquito
11 Some autumn babies
12 Keep
13 It's big in California
21 "I didn't sleep ___"
22 Mr. Up's or Two Brothers
26 Scot's refusal
28 Finn on the Mississippi
29 Morning sizzler
30 Bugs
31 Brink
34 Chances
35 Parking lot's edge
36 Bread ___ School of English
37 Dessert made with Oreos
38 Part of the invisible spectrum
39 Use a soapbox
40 "Uno ___": cantina request
43 "The Addams Family" cousin
45 Holy city?
46 On cloud nine
47 Wild parties
49 ___-ski
50 ___ Creek Bakery
51 Down the road
54 [Gulp!]
55 Outback order
56 This, in Tijuana
57 Possible prince?
58 The NBA's Warriors, on scoreboards

MIDDLEBURY SPORTS TAKES THREE TOUGH LOSSES OVER THE WEEKEND

By JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor

Middlebury athletics had an unfortunate weekend as a trio of teams all took losses in crucial end of season matchups. The football team (6–3) lost to Tufts 17–7, the field hockey team (15–2) lost in the NESCAC semifinals to Bates 2–1 and the men's soccer team (14–1–3) suffered their first loss of the season in the NESCAC finals after Connecticut College beat them 3–1.

The football team's loss ended what was a very strong season on a sour note. Since the NESCAC has no playoffs for football, the contest against Tufts marked the team's last game of the season. Against the Jumbos, the Panther's defense played strongly and Connor McClellan '28 capped off a strong rookie season with a 30 yard touchdown in the fourth quarter, giving him seven rushing touchdowns for the season. However, Middlebury's passing attack was limited as signal caller Brian Moran '26 threw two interceptions, and Tufts ultimately prevailed.

Overall, Moran and the Panthers had a very strong season. As a whole, the Panthers were fourth in the NESCAC in total touchdowns and had the fourth fewest total touchdowns allowed. In Moran's first full season at quarterback, he threw for 16 touchdowns and only six interceptions. His primary targets, Patrick Jamin '25 and Ethan Vashel '25 both ranked in the top-10 in the NESCAC for receiving yards per game. Meanwhile, McClellan and Carter Stockwell '24.5 gave Middlebury a formidable rushing attack.

"As a whole, I think it was a very successful season," offensive lineman Patrick O'Neill '24.5 said. "It's obviously disappointing to not win a NESCAC championship, but it was still a great season with a great group of guys."

One of the team's defining moments from this past season was their 24–21 victory against NESCAC runner-up Trinity. The Panthers scored with less than a minute left in the fourth quarter to beat their co-NESCAC champion from last season.

Next year, the team is in a good position to build on their success from this season. With Moran having a year of experience under his belt and McClellan leading the running game, the Panthers have a shot at next year's championship.

"I think they have a really good chance to be great again next year," O'Neill said. "It's a new team every year, so they gotta keep working, but I'm excited to watch them."

Just like the football team, the field hockey team will not repeat this season as NESCAC champions. The field hockey team will not be NESCAC champions for the first time since 2016, and the team's loss against Tufts gave them multiple losses in a season for the first time since 2017.

Middlebury's loss against Bates came in a game where the Panthers dominated possession and outshot Bates by a staggering amount. By the end of the game, Middlebury had 16 shots on goal while the Bobcats only had four shots on goal. The Bates goalie, Ava Donahue, had a tremendous game, recording nine saves.

Amy Griffin '24.5 opened the scoring for the Panthers with her ninth goal of the season, but Bates found the equalizer in the second period after a strike from Brooke Moloney-Kolen, and in the fourth quarter Bates took the lead for good courtesy of a penalty stroke goal from Anna Cote.

Despite the loss in the NESCAC tournament and a season that is not quite as dominant as they are used to, the field hockey team is still in a good position to win their seventh consecutive national championship this season. The team leads the NESCAC in overall goals scored with 89. The second place team, Tufts, only has 51 goals despite playing one more game. On defense, the Panthers are also strong, recording an opponent's goal average of 0.88, the third lowest in the NESCAC.

Individually, a number of field hockey players have had great seasons. Four Middlebury players are in the top-10 in the NESCAC for goals. Caroline Segal '24.5 leads the NESCAC with 18, Georgianne Defeo '26 is right behind her with 15, Hanna Medwar '25 is in seventh place with 10 and Griffin is in eighth place with nine. Griffin is also second in the NESCAC with 12 assists.

Even with two losses this year, the Panthers are still the top-ranked team in the country, and they secured an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament. The team has a bye for the first round of the tournament, but they will host the second and third rounds of the tournament as they are set to play the winner of Bryn Mawr and SUNY Geneseo at 11:00 am on Saturday at Peter Kohn Field.

The men's soccer team also saw a defeat in their NESCAC tournament. After an undefeated season and a 1–0 win against Bowdoin in the NESCAC semifinals, Connecticut College triumphed over the Panthers in the NESCAC finals.

In the finals matchup, the Camels took a quick 1–0 lead in the 21st minute, but the Panthers stormed back as defender Ari Klayman '27 scored the equalizer just five minutes later. Conn College though was in excellent form and scored two more goals before full time to secure their NESCAC championship victory.

The finals loss is a missed opportunity for a squad with immense talent. The team leads the NESCAC in total goals with 44. Individually, Colin Dugan '27, Keagan Harder '28 and Gavin Randolph '26 lead the offense for the Panthers with six goals scored each. Randolph also has three assists, putting him in sixth place in the NESCAC in points with 15. In goal for the Panthers, Joey Waterman '26 has the fourth lowest goals against average in the NESCAC at .634, and he leads the NESCAC in shutouts with 10.

The men's soccer season is not over yet, though. The team earned an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament, and they will be hosting the first two rounds of the tournament this weekend. They are set to play their first elimination game against Hunter College this Saturday at 11 a.m.

COURTESY PHOTO / ANNA SAWIN

The men's soccer team is introduced before their game against Tufts University.

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

The field hockey team huddles together before their loss in the semifinals against Bates College.

Seven Questions with Tiger Xie '26.5, men's soccer

By TING CUI
Sports Editor

Tiger Xie '26.5 is making his mark in his first season as goalkeeper on the men's soccer team. Having grown up between Shanghai and Toronto, Xie took an unconventional path to Middlebury athletics, joining as a walk-on after playing for the club soccer team. In this edition of Seven Questions, he shares his path to the team, reflects on their remarkable season and reveals how he garners some pre-game luck in the New York Times Mini crossword.

Ting Cui: How did you first get started with soccer?

Tiger Xie: I honestly don't remember when and how I started playing soccer. It probably was in first grade but I do remember playing together with all my friends at the time and that was definitely part of the reason. I also like the smell of fresh grass so that could have been it, too. I think running around a grass field in the sun was probably the definition of fun for seven year-old me.

TC: What made you choose Middlebury?

TX: I grew up in Shanghai and Toronto, both very urban settings, where I was getting a little sick of the city life so I wanted a change of scenery. I didn't think I'd spend 4 years of my life in rural Vermont otherwise. I enjoy being part of such a tight-knit community where you see familiar faces everyday. I also think we have a pretty cool mascot compared to other schools. What even is an Eph?

COURTESY PHOTO / ANNA SAWIN

Tiger Xie '26.5 dribbles with a ball during practice.

TC: Most players join the team as recruited fall freshmen, but you made it as a junior Feb walk-on. What was that experience like?

TX: I didn't apply to college with playing soccer in mind, but the idea of possibly joining the team came to mind during my Febmester before coming here. When I arrived on campus, I first started playing with the club soccer team, which was a big part of why I was able to walk-on. I had a pretty successful season with the club team and was invited to train with men's soccer last spring before officially walking on for the fall season. All my teammates and coaches were very supportive throughout the process and I can't be more grateful to be part of this program.

TC: The team has been having an incredible season (14–1–3). What's the pressure like as you aim for the NCAA championship?

TX: We're just looking to focus on each game at hand. We've put in the hard work and we're confident that we can outcompete teams but we're also not entitled as the number one seed. There are no easy games, so we're just looking to play how we've played all season and let our game guide us on the field.

TC: What's been your most memorable game or moment on the team so far?

TX: The most memorable moment for me was when we beat Babson 3–1 at home. This was the second game of a double-header weekend and one of our teammates ended up injured at the hospital after the first game, so we were playing for more than ourselves. We started off strong and created chance after chance, but they held a draw going into the dying moments of the game. When it seemed like it just wasn't our day, Ari [Klayman '27]'s shot gave us the lead with less than three minutes to go and I probably rewatched that goal 30 times. It was one of those games that reminded me why I love this sport.

TC: What's something about being on the soccer team that might surprise people?

TX: I think we as a team are pretty big fans of Yogurt City in town. We run soccer tennis tournaments or trivia during team meetings and winners often get gift cards to Yogurt City. I think the owners are pretty familiar with us at this point and they're expecting a big order every time we step in the door.

TC: Do you have any pre-game rituals?

TX: I'm a big NYT games fan and it always feels good to solve the mini or get the connections on the morning of a game. I also enjoy spending time with the dogs in the trainer's room if they happen to be there. Shoutout Cooper, Henry and Oscar.

Editor's Note: This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

GOING ON SITE: OUR TOUR OF THE NEW DORM

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updated college art museum and multipurpose learning space in the coming years.

The project first broke ground in June 2023, and completed its "dry-in" phase — the period of construction in which the exterior support structures and roof are completed — in March of this year.

Based out of Brandon, Vt., construction company Naylor & Breen has had a long-term partnership with the college beyond the development of the new dorm. Naylor & Breen have renovated a number of Middlebury buildings and facilities, including Warner Hall, the Prism Center for Queer and Trans Life and, most recently, the Johnson Memorial Building.

Last week, Project Superintendent John Drinwater gave us a tour of the dorm in its current state. We donned our hard hats and ventured where few Middlebury students have gone before. Walking carefully between new welding and to-be-completed wiring, The Campus' executive team bravely explored the new dorm to see just how well the class of 2029 will be living next fall.

The basement floor — one of five total accessible levels, with a non-residential sixth level off-limits to students — features a laundry room with nine washer and dryer units, a bike room with 55 racks and two janitorial closets, according to Drinwater. The college is still debating whether to install heat-pump systems — which Drinwater said would be more expensive to maintain and require advanced mechanical knowledge — or the more typical units available to anyone in Forest, Atwater or Stewart Halls.

The basement floor also features the electrical room, which is currently vacant of all the necessary electrical equipment needed to power the dorm. Drinwater explained that the electrical power system is set to arrive in early winter.

"One of the things we're waiting on is our main electrical gear, so I can't energize anything in the building until I have the main gear. Same with the elevator, and all that big stuff. We should be seeing that around December," Drinwater told The Campus.

Moving to the upper floors, Drinwater detailed the designs and dimensions of the residential rooms — almost all of them doubles, and which will number about 150 rooms, in order to house approximately 300 students. Each double room contains one open closet space for each student — similar to the open closets in Atwater Hall rooms — and built-in shelves on either side of the room's door.

One new feature of each double in the new dorm that is not found anywhere else on campus are peepholes, located next to the pin-pad. Directed into the hallway, the peepholes allow for students inside the room to gain a wide-angle view of anyone who might be at the door or nearby in the hallway. Each of us took a turn putting our eyes up to the peephole from inside a room to see Drinwater's shape on the other side, where he stood patiently waiting for us to come out.

"It was part of the hardware package I mean, I think it's a great addition and they're pretty concealed where right next to the hardware, you don't even notice them," Drinwater explained.

Each double, Drinwater said, is 15 feet in width by 20 feet in length. The doubles on the first floor also feature ceilings that are two feet higher than those of the rooms on higher floors.

The communal bathrooms on each floor are spacious, L-shaped spaces with three open sinks and several sizable, individual lockable spaces with a shower and toilet — luxuries we could only dream of as first years.

Additionally, each floor will offer a kitchen space — a true rarity among Middlebury dorms, which usually only feature one or two for the residents of each hall that does not include suite-style living arrangements.

Overlooking Battell Beach, the fourth floor of the new dormitory offers a common room comparable to those of the floors beneath it, but with two impressive additions: cathedral ceilings and arched windows, the latter of which offers the clearest view of the campus sprawl of any accessible vantage point in the dorm. With vaulted ceilings and spacious dorms, the next crop of first years will be living like royalty come September.

Located above the fourth floor is the attic floor, which will be off-limits to students and houses much of the lighting and climate-regulation equipment the dorm requires. (Note: Do not even attempt to venture near the cupola if you have a fear of heights or unstable ladders, as we discovered some of us do last week.)

Among these pieces of equipment are energy recovery (ER) units, and Drinwater explained how they set and control the interior temperature of the dorm.

"[The ER units] pull air into the building, they climatize it and then push it out to the rooms," Drinwater said.

While circling the perimeter, Drinwater provided an update on the masonry and chimneywork which sheathes the inner walls and structure of the dorm.

"We're getting close and we've been working on the chimneys up there. There's a lot of really large stones to set up on top. Realistically, I'm gonna run out of time by the time I finish [the roof masonry]," Drinwater said. The masonry team plans to work through the winter to complete what work remains on the chimneys and on the sides of the building.

"All the kids will kick the doors in periodically, and spray paint stuff in there and play frisbee and just do fun stuff," Drinwater explained, warning that there are plenty of hazards to trip up unexpected partiers who want to see the new residence in the moonlight. "It's getting better now that the stairs are tied in, but there's some pretty good open shafts or like at the elevator in the stairs."

The very first students to live in the new dorm will not be first years, but Middlebury Language Schools students next summer. Whether it will be in Russian, Chinese or German, the students will inevitably have a lot to say about the impressive facilities that Naylor & Breen employees have been and will continue to work through the winter and spring to welcome them in June.